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ONTARIO
DEPARTMENT
OF
EDUCATION

MEMORANDUM

Re Selection of Text-books in Social Studies

(JUNIOR DIVISION)

CURRICULUM: 8

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(54-4977)

Ministry of Education, Ontario
Historical Collection

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Social Studies Courses, Grades 5 and 6

Some teachers have expressed the opinion that, heretofore, in many schools the geographical content of these courses has not been adequately treated and they have been taught as if they were courses in History. Actually, the courses are less the story of the discoverers than a description of what the discoverers found. The aim of the Grade 5 course is to give the pupil a view of the world as a whole; to familiarize him with the location and characteristics of various important land masses and bodies of water; and to provide him with a description of important parts of the earth as they were when the discoverers found them, with particular reference to the climate, the resources, interesting geographical features, and the people. The motives that drove the discoverers and explorers in their quest should be made clear as the tale unfolds. In Grade 6 the course deals in somewhat greater detail with the discovery and exploration of North America, particular attention being given to the explorations that led to a knowledge of the surface geography of Canada. The story of what happened to these lands and peoples as a result of their contact with Europeans belongs to a later stage in the study of Geography and History.

The globe should always be used to locate the various areas of the world dealt with and to relate their position to that of the pupils' homes. The Grade 5 pupil will for the first time be making extensive use of maps and it will be necessary for the teacher to make clear the conventions that are used in maps. Pupils learn to use maps by using them, and in this connection it is pointed out that the General Regulations for Public and Separate Schools require the Board to provide the school with

a mounted globe not less than 12" in diameter, pupils' atlases in numbers sufficient for class use in Grades 4 to 10, both inclusive, and a reference atlas for the school library.

Attention is drawn also to the book, Anderzhon: STEPS IN MAP READING (Gage). This book is listed in Circular 14 and is subject to the reimbursement grant. The book was designed for use chiefly in Grades 6 and 7, but the teacher of Grade 5 will find the material on pages 1 to 28 helpful in developing notions of direction and the concept of the earth as a sphere. In fact, if terms such as "environment" and "symbol" which occur in these pages, were explained, the average Grade 5 pupil could probably read the pages for himself.

APPROVED TEXT-BOOKS

The text-books listed below have been placed on the approved list (Circular 14, February, 1955) for the courses in Social Studies in Grades 5 and 6. These books have been written by Canadian educators, illustrated by Canadian artists, and produced by Canadian publishers. They have been written to assist the teacher in achieving the aims of the course.

Grade 5

Lambert, THEY WENT EXPLORING, Book Society, $2.00

Hamilton, PIRATES AND PATHFINDERS, Clarke, Irwin & Co., $2.00

Code & Daniher, A WORLD DISCOVERED, J. M. Dent & Sons, $2.00

Tait, THE WORLD WAS WIDE, Ryerson Press, $1.85

Grade 6

Chatterton et al, NEW WORLD SOCIAL STUDIES, J. C. Winston Co., $1.95

Tait, BREASTPLATE AND BUCKSKIN, Ryerson Press, $1.85

Tanser, WESTWARD TO THE AMERICAS, (Revised, 1955) Longmans Green & Co., $2.00

(Prices quoted are subject to the usual discounts.)

It is anticipated that in most schools one of these books will be chosen as the basic text-book for the grade concerned. In addition a sufficient number of copies of one or more of the other books should be available in the classroom library for reference purposes. A careful examination should be made of each of the books before one is selected as a basic text. To aid teachers or committees of teachers charged with the task of making the selection some comments are offered in this memorandum about the qualities a satisfactory text-book should possess. Desirable characteristics of text, illustrations, maps, and other features are outlined as a basis on which books in Social Studies may be judged. If other books appear in this field, they may be evaluated on the same basis.

TEXT

(a) **Coverage of Course:** The book should adequately cover the course as set forth in the Programme of Studies. In some cases the authors have considered that the work of certain men mentioned in the Programme is not important enough to be extensively treated. In some cases the author has considered that the work of an explorer not mentioned in the course is important

enough to be treated in the text. The explorations of Burton, Speke, and Baker were considered by one author too intricate for detailed treatment in Grade 5. Another author considered that the explorations of Vitus Bering were important enough to form a part of the course and has included them. In some of the books the story of the conquest of Mount Everest has been included. These features are not to be considered as deviations from the intention of the course.

(b) **Accuracy and Authenticity:** All information must be accurate and statements of fact must be verifiable by reference to recognized authority.

(c) **Interest:** (i) **Narrative.** For children of these grades the text should be in the form of a story or stories. The history of the discovery of the world is, in fact, a story made up of episodes which are complete stories in themselves. The course should be so treated. If the author has imagination, can write vividly, and is himself enthusiastic about his subject matter, the text will be interesting. Attempts to "write down" to children are invariably failures.

(ii) **Concreteness.** Concrete language is preferable to abstract. Where a general statement containing abstract nouns is used it is clarified and made more intelligible by the use of a concrete example.

(Here, for instance, is an illustration taken from a History of England. In describing social conditions in England in the 18th century the writer states, *The rural peasantry . . . were left without much moral or religious training of any sort.* This general statement is given life and becomes memorable by the concrete example, *We saw but one Bible in the parish . . . and that was used to prop a flowerpot.*

(iii) **Detail.** There is a tendency in some books to overdo the use of proper names—native tribes, chieftains, unimportant small villages. While these may give an apparent air of authenticity, they do not add to the interest. They soon become burdensome and are, in most cases, lacking in significance.

(d) **Language:** (i) **Clarity.** The language should be clear and precise without vagueness or ambiguity. Pupils accustomed to text-books written with clarity in which words are given their precise meanings will tend to express themselves with exactness and clarity.

(ii) **Readability.** Vocabulary and sentence structure should, of course, be suitable to the grade level. Considerations of "vocabulary control", however, or mechanical application of the "Lorge formula", or other such device used to determine "readability" should not be allowed to kill the freshness or naturalness of the author's style. These devices are useful helps in estimating the "readability" of a passage after the writer has completed it; synthetic prose written to fit the "Lorge" or other formula is invariably stilted, and unnatural.

(e) **Objectivity:** Statements referring to members of particular national, racial, or religious groups should be objective, unbiased, and free from derogatory implication.

(f) **Index:** Every social studies text-book should contain an index, as well as a table of contents, partly for the convenience of the reader and also because the use of the index is a "reading skill" that has to be taught. The social studies text-book should contain material for that teaching.

(a) **Illustration a Teaching Device:** An illustration should be used to emphasize or clarify a point in the text, or to say something that can be said better in a picture than in words. (There is truth in the adage, "One picture is worth a thousand words".) The illustration has no value unless it helps the reader to grasp the author's message more fully. It should not be used only to "break pages of type" or merely for decoration. (Chapter "headpieces" and "end-pieces" or "fillers" used on a part of a page that might otherwise be left blank may be exceptions to this rule.)

(b) **Authenticity:** Details of dress, weapons, tools, and implements, vehicles, landscape, etc., must be authentic and accurate.

(c) **Portraits:** Portraits of historical characters drawn by book illustrators are of little if any value to pupils at this stage. Authentic portraits of many of the characters referred to in these books do not exist. If they do, the book illustrator is seldom able to reproduce the features with accuracy and it is doubtful if there is any good purpose to be served by such reproduction.

(d) **Colour:** Clean black and white line drawings are often superior to coloured illustrations. The use of colour, by reducing contrast, sometimes obscures detail that should be made very clear.

(e) **Artistry:** To be of most value an illustration should, in addition to conveying its message clearly, meet the accepted canons of design as to composition—unity (balance, clearly

defined centres of interest, rhythm) and variety. If the illustrations in the pupils' text-books are artistic productions, the long term effect should be to elevate the public taste in art.

(f) **Position on the Page:** It is bad page layout to place an illustration in the middle of the page unless it comes at a point where the thought is complete and an illustration is required. An illustration is badly placed if the reader's eye must pass over it to complete the sentence he is reading. It is good practice to place a marginal illustration or diagram beside the point in the text that is being illustrated.

(g) **Captions:** The caption under an illustration should be regarded as a teaching device. It should be used to draw attention to important details of the illustration. A caption that does not add something to the illustration is of no value.

MAPS

(a) **Conventional Signs:** The pupils in these grades are meeting maps for the first time or at least are making extensive use of them for the first time. The illustrative maps should, therefore, resemble as nearly as possible the conventional map found in an atlas, and should employ the recognized conventional signs. If colour is used, it is preferable to show bodies of water in pale blue rather than brown or green. Other accepted conventions of map making should be adhered to.

(b) **Lettering:** Lettering should be clear and conventional. "Arty" lettering should not be used. Spelling of names of places on maps and in the text should be consistent. If there is reason for using different spellings in map and text an explanation should be given.

(c) **Detail:** Unnecessary detail should be omitted but every place named in the text should be shown on an accompanying map. If a locality is not important enough to be shown on a map, reference to it might well be omitted from the text.

GEOGRAPHICAL TERMS

New geographical concepts should be developed as they are introduced and new terms should be explained when they are first used.

Explanation may be made by

(a) definition or explanation in the text,

(b) diagram, illustration, or marginal drawing (with caption).

If the explanation will cause too great an interruption of the story, the diagram and explanation should be placed at the end of the chapter, or in an alphabetical series at the end of the book with an appropriate method of referring the pupil to the explanatory material.

BOOK LISTS

An important aim of any course in Social Studies should be to encourage in the pupil a continuing interest in the subject. If the teacher is accomplishing this purpose in Grades 5 and 6 the pupil will want to read other books pertaining to the course. Book lists containing titles suitable for use in connection with the course should be included in the text-book.

These lists should be up-to-date, and should

(a) list books that are available and suitable to the grade level,

(b) indicate books that are out of print but are available in libraries,

(c) indicate books suitable as teachers' references but too advanced for children's reading,

(d) give the name of the Canadian publisher or importer,

(e) include short stories, essays, or other material relating to the courses contained in the readers on the approved list.

EXERCISES AND ACTIVITIES

If exercises or activities are suggested, in addition to exercises of the recall type (which are the least valuable though they are admissible), there should be some that are thought-provoking, that require reflection, that stimulate the pupil to seek further information and require him to make judgments. If further information is required some indication of where it is to be found should be given. Activities suggested should be for a purpose that the pupil can readily understand. They should be practical and such as can be carried out in an ordinary classroom. Exercises or activities that are mere busy work should have no place in the text-book.

FORMAT

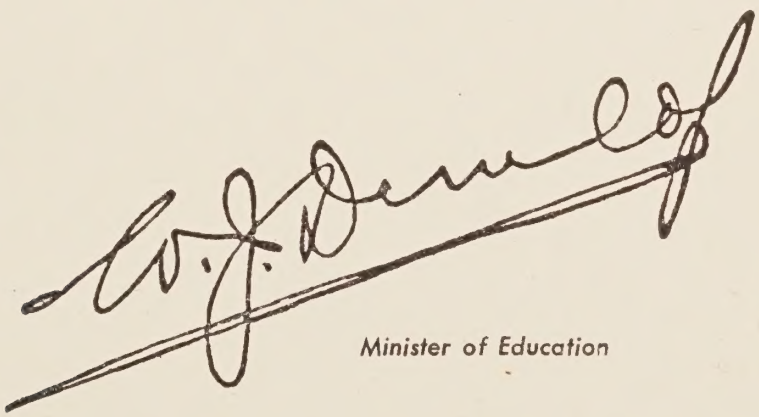
(a) The layout of the page should be attractive.

(b) Type should be clear and easily read.

(c) Paper should be durable and should not produce glare under strong light. Glazed paper tends to be hard on the eyes.

(d) Binding—durable, not easily soiled, with attractive design, should permit book to lie open when in use.

It is unlikely that all the features listed will be present in all these books as they are now presented. If some are absent the selection committee must weigh their omission against other desirable features that are included and make their decision having in mind the price of the books.



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